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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2730
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3248
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1556
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3608
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3001
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001128

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PROTESTERS ENDURE ABUSE AS THEY AWAIT
CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

REF: BISHKEK 809

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 8, Poloff met with two of the 19 defendants facing charges related to the demonstration that took place in Balykchy on election day (July 23). The defendants described the events that led to their arrest and recounted tales of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of the authorities. The defendants believe that they face stiff sentences and endured painful abuse because the authorities aim to make them examples to others planning to oppose the government. End Summary.

TRIAL POSTPONED BUT SENTENCING IMMINENT

¶2. (C) On October 8, Poloff traveled to Balykchy and met with two of the 19 defendants arrested during a July 23 election day protest. Gulnara Jamghirchiyeva and Aijarkyn Asanova recalled numerous accounts of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of Ministry of Interior and Kyrgyz Security Services officers. The trial was postponed, pending a ruling by the Issyk-Kul oblast courts on an appeal to remove the Balykchy city judge after he openly expressed his personal bias against the defendants, claiming that their "fate was decided long ago." The defendants face charges of preventing elections, participation in mass disorder, and threatening to overthrow the government and could be sent to prison for up to 10 years.

¶3. (C) Poloff met with Jamghirchiyeva and Asanova at the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan Presidential election campaign headquarters in Balykchy. Police had sealed the headquarters following their arrest and at the moment that Poloff arrived, they were opening the office up for the first time since July 23. The office was awash with Presidential candidate Almaz Atambayev's posters, flyers, and banners. Jamghirchiyeva, a member of the Social Democrats since 2007

and official election observer for the Party, was shocked to discover that anything of value had been stolen or confiscated, including a computer, fax machine, photocopier, and telephone.

WHO ARE THE DEFENDANTS?

14. (C) Of the 19 defendants, five are actually supporters of the Social Democrats, one is a local Ata Meken Party leader, and the rest are regular citizens with no political affiliation. Jamghirchiyeva said that she and Asanova, a student and Social Democratic Party member since 2006, were the only two women arrested. Eleven defendants remained in detention and seven were released on their own recognizance until the trial, while one is in the hospital. Friends and family members had to sign for their release and would be held accountable if they failed to appear in court. Asanova said that one, Kanat Sopiyeu, was sent to a Bishkek hospital for treatment of swollen kidneys after being beaten by the police. Although ordered back into custody after failing to appear at the preliminary trials, Sopiyeu has since fled the hospital and disappeared. Jamghirchiyeva added that the authorities refused the treatment of several defendants who suffered from ailments such as tuberculosis, internal bleeding, and asthma.

WHAT HAPPENED ON JULY 23?

15. (C) Jamghirchiyeva recounted the events on July 23 that led to her arrest. As the Social Democrats' registered observer for a local polling station, Jamghirchiyeva said

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that she witnessed ballot box stuffing and election commission members handing out 100 som (approximately \$2.30) together with completed ballots to incoming voters. She said that the head of the city education department offered to pay her to keep silent. She refused and was eventually thrown out of the polling station. Jamghirchiyeva went to the city election commission to file a complaint about the flagrant violations. A crowd of protesters had already gathered and police had barricaded the building to keep them from entering. She confronted Kanybek Deghenbayev, the Balykchy city police chief, but drew no response. Jamghirchiyeva rejoined the growing mob at the moment that Deghenbayev ordered his officers to break up the protest, using percussion grenades and batons on the protesters. In addition to the 19 defendants arrested, Social Democrat Parliamentarians Baktybek Asanakunov and Kubanychbek Kadyrov were also detained but released the next day.

ABUSE AT THE HANDS OF THE AUTHORITIES

16. (C) Jamghirchiyeva described widespread beatings by the authorities during the protesters' arrest and detention. She said that she was beaten on her arms, legs and back and that her body was black and blue for weeks afterwards. Jamghirchiyeva said that she personally witnessed three police officers beating MP Kadyrov as he was being detained. The detainees were held in the basement of a police station, in one large cell, and forced to stand until the morning of July 24, when the beatings continued. She said that the police and "other masked men" beat them into submission to force them to sign confessions and to break their spirits. She said that one young protester was beaten on his heels so badly that he was unable to walk.

17. (C) Asanova said that the Karakol police chief threatened to order his officers to rape her if she didn't sign documents refusing the legal counsel of Azimbek Beknazarov. She refused to sign but the police never acted on their threat. During preliminary hearings, Beknazarov, a former MP and Prosecutor General, picked apart the state's case against

the protesters by highlighting inconsistencies and significant mistakes made by investigators. Asanova said that the other defendants were also pressured to refuse his legal assistance but was unaware that anyone gave in to the authorities' demands. Jamghirchiyeva added that their family members have come under pressure by the authorities and some have been fired from their local government positions.

AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS

18. (C) Poloff asked why the 19 defendants received such harsh treatment and face up to 10 years in prison when other protesters detained around the country in the wake of the Presidential elections were fined and released the same day. Jamghirchiyeva said that the authorities were making the defendants out to be examples for others, which would "scare the opposition and keep them from speaking out against the government." She had asked the same question of Deghenbayev, to which he had responded that the original charges were going to be administrative and that the whole group would have paid a fine and been released. He then alluded to the fact that the charges were later changed to criminal, which could result in several years' imprisonment, at the request of senior officials in Bishkek. Jamghirchiyeva believed that the White House wanted to send a message of fear to the opposition.

COMMENT

19. (C) If the government's harsh treatment of the Balykchy

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defendants and threats of up to ten years' imprisonment truly was an attempt to scare the opposition into hiding, then they have yet to succeed. Following the arrests in Balykchy, the opposition continued to protest in Bishkek and other parts of the country and even held demonstrations to protest the original defendants' arrest. However, the fate of the defendants cannot possibly have a serious impact on the crumbling opposition, which is already dispirited and rudderless.
GFOELLER